Workshop on Human Resources Management and Training: Developing Capabilities for the future

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SESSION 6

Training program for managers
Taking Lean one step further

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Abstract

This paper describes the second step of lean management training in Statistics Norway. Based on experiences and feedback from the first round of more traditional teaching of lean management, we sharpened and narrowed the improvement areas in order keep focus, and we intensified training on an individual level.

Our aim with the program is to help changing elements of the management style in order to create and support a culture for continuous improvement based on lean philosophy.

In the described program, focus on specific tools and selected areas, persistently training in everyday situations, individual support and specific tasks did make a difference.

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Introduction

Statistics Norway has a long tradition of Total Quality Management, and is continuously working to improve performance and streamlining its work processes. Nevertheless introducing lean methodology in Statistics Norway (2012) has made some changes as to the degree of involvement of employees. Lean implies a bottom-up approach; it requires empowerment and involvement of all employees. It became very clear that we needed to concentrate more on culture in addition to specific methods and processes. In this change process our managers has a key role and a new type of leadership is required. The topic of change management was thus emphasized, and managers were given training and arenas for developing new management skills.

What is Lean

Lean manufacturing builds on a long history of methods for process control and quality management, and was developed for efficiency in the industrial production sector, with Toyota as a “flagship”. The methodology has grown in popularity in the public sector in Norway over the last decade. Standardised work processes shall reduce vulnerability and facilitate efficiency, and a more efficient operation will enable more statistical demands to be met within budget restraints.

Important aspects are to focus on key processes, identify bottlenecks and remove operations with little or no value. Measuring and reporting on performance is essential. This is demanding for an organization used to focus on quality of the end products, and less on measuring. The overall objective of Lean is to create a culture for continuous improvement based on strong empowerment of all employees involved.

Lean in Statistics Norway

After a tentatively start-up in 2010, an official decision to introduce Lean in Statistics Norway was made in February 2012. Since then, Statistics Norway has used Lean methodology to improve efficiency and to ensure continuous improvement throughout the organization.

During the first phase a few larger cross-sectional projects were conducted in line with lean philosophy and by using Lean tools. Parts of the organisation were exposed to Lean thinking. A second phase of introduction started in the summer of 2013, and involved a much heavier investment both economical as well as man-hours. External consultants supported the process actively. The Lean effort was organized as a project with a full-time project manager and several internal Lean facilitators, with a mandate to support the organization.
The whole organization of Statistics Norway passed through a Lean involvement program in "waves" of 6 months each, involving three departments at the time, and with special support and training for the managers. Main areas were "How to manage daily operations in an effective and efficient way?". Another major topic was optimization of processes. Last but not least the participants were encouraged to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses as Lean managers "Does this requires something new from me, and am I prepared for this?"

Once all nine departments were covered, the next training program for our managers was launched summer of 2015.

**Being a Lean manager in Statistics Norway**

Plans and structures are important, but real impact is only obtained when people support Lean, and it is therefore essential to engage and empower people. Our managers have challenging positions within this paradigm. They need to give staff the autonomy necessary to achieve motivation and obtain high-performance. They need to balance expectations from stakeholders and available resources in their unit. An important part of Lean is to measure, prioritize and follow up. This requires transparancy and a well-documented knowledge of "everything that goes on", and in the case of Statistics Norway, more than the organization has been used to. It was clear that we needed a tighter focus on daily operations.

Traditionally Statistics Norway’s management has been chosen for their excellent academic skills in their area, more than general management skills. A natural consequence is to keep a close eye on the quality of the work of their staff. There is a growing recognition that a high degree of control of staff, often grounded in distrust, generally is counterproductive, and especially in knowledge based organisations like Statistics Norway. When asked to describe the ideal Lean leadership, the message from employees was clear from a culture gap analysis done in 2013/2014; we wanted leaders who:

- uses teamwork and has an inclusive leadership style
- are involving and clearly pulling in the same direction
- uses coaching and gives feedback
- creates trust in teams and the organisation
- gets each individual to do his best
Leadership in Statistics Norway consists of what we call strategic management, personnel management and academic management. This way of managing is now under pressure as we have introduced a fourth dimension of Lean management. Our approach is based on introducing Lean management while respecting the other three dimensions:

Training program – one step further
The key role of our managers and new demands with regard to leadership has been on the agenda for quite some years. The topic of change management has been emphasized, and managers have been given training and arenas for developing new management skills. Based on the leadership training already carried out, we saw a need for training on the new elements brought by Lean management. We wanted to make sure that they became new habits, new routines and adapted as part of the everyday life in Statistics Norway.

The Lean leadership role is exercised in various venues – but it is in the daily interaction between managers and employees there is real capacity for change. To help leaders change their behaviour, they need to be observed in their natural settings and coached for change based on this; given the opportunity to reflect and adjust their everyday life at work.
Most of the observations were conducted in the leaders weekly “blackboard meetings”, where we could observe the interaction between leader end employee, systems and structure supporting the change in the focus areas.

It is also important to stress that the leader should not be a coach, but he/she should be coaching in his leadership. The difference is of course related to the managers’ special role in order to ensuring the overall objectives of the organisation is in focus and is reached, as well as setting the frames.

The second part og the management training program, which is the one presented in this paper, started in the summer of 2015 and went over a period of 14 weeks of development and close follow up. Continuous follow up dialogues were planned after ending the program to ensure there still was a pressure on continuation and sustainability, after the coaches and facilitators left the arena.

Figure 2: Schedule for the training program
There are 10 core dimensions in Lean management. They are all important, but it is not possible to practice all at once. By focusing on some of them, the aim is to achieve greater concentration and perceived improvement.

![Diagram of core dimensions in Lean management](source)

**Figure 3: Core dimensions in lean management**  
(Source: Implement Consulting Group)

Based on Statistics Norway’s specific challenges and our assumption of the best short term effects; the following four dimensions of Lean leadership were selected as a starting point:

- **Operation management**
  The leader will plan and follow up daily operations and secure good capacity management (tasks and resources) as well as skills development.

- **Coordinated management**
  The leader takes responsibility to ensure he/she is available to follow up operations and the employees closely. The leader will ensure continuous improvement and will make sure meetings and agendas are coordinated.

- **Problem solving**
  Leader and employees anticipate problems, find root causes and solve the basic problem first time, avoiding that the same problem happens again and again.

- **Coaching leadership and feedback**
  The leader shares his/her knowledge and supports the employees in their further development. The leader is coaching more than fixing, and gives concrete and constructive feedback.

One very important tool in this training program is the “Lean leadership maturity model”, developed in cooperation with top management and external consultants in the start-up phase. This model describes four levels of maturity within each of the focus areas, and is used as a self-assessment tool as well as a reference tool during observation and the following coaching dialogues. It was very useful in order to discuss the level of maturity and the development during the whole program.
The self-assessment is based on a common set of "descriptions" in order to anchor the references and raise the awareness of the organisation’s functioning. The following example is from one of the focus areas; operation management. All four focus areas have a master diagram (model) with descriptions of situations. It is two dimensional and exemplifies with a text what characterizes each level of maturity, and how the different parts of the organization relates to the selected areas and levels of maturity.

As we can see from the chart below, the maturity model has its role to play as food for thought and basis for improvement in all steps of the development process:
The leaders selected for this program all had a hierarchical dependence on one or several of the other leaders involved. The rationale was to support and define a group that together could create dialogues and meeting structures focusing on the same Lean elements, and carry them through in their own part of the organisation. Hence the first program (2015/2016) involved in total three directors, five section leaders and six group leaders. For the second round, started in 2016 (and still ongoing at the moment of this paper’s publication), the program involved one entire department; one director, six section leaders and nine group leaders.

**Lessons learned so far**
A few weeks after the first program ended, we had an evaluation of the entire training program. The results are quite positive:

- observable behavioural changes among leaders.
- self-evaluation scores improved by between and 17 and 37 percentage points
- Employees are more involved at meetings.
- training done as part of the leader’s daily work is less extensive
- the maturity model is an excellent tool for reflection, coaching and feedback.

The combination of theoretical seminars with customized methods and practical tools, together with a very tight and intense follow-up was one of the success factors of the changes we experienced.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self assessment (0-100 scale)</th>
<th>Before training</th>
<th>After training</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Operations management</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinated management</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching leadership and feedback</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Leader’s self-evaluation scores in the areas they received training**

The leader’s employees were also asked to evaluate whether they experienced any behavioural changes. They reported observable changes in operations management and how meetings are executed. When it comes to coaching and feedback, the change was unfortunately not as big as we had hoped. One reason was the short time period allowed for training between the relevant theory session and the evaluation. It is an area for future improvement and more training.

The feedback from the participants has been quite good. Even if the program was quite demanding and intensive, the managers report back that this change management program offers useful tools, support and needed structure to help implement Lean into their sections. They do experience a change, and feel more comfortable in their roles as Lean leaders.

As for every athlete, knowledge and training is essential in order to improve: drilling on specific techniques over and over again. Being observed, reflecting, discussing, setting new targets – and drilling again.

**References**
